

OLD HANDS!

Three of the Stronger Families Fund projects have featured several times in this update series. Here, they reflect on their progress, discuss how their project has changed their community, and say how they plan to maintain and build on their work into the future.

ASHMONT COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE WAGGA WAGGA, NSW

What has the project been doing since the last report?

We have been very busy with a wide variety of ongoing and new activities. Some of the ongoing activities are Tuesday morning's Health Clinic, where we have a regular attendance of approximately 20 people, and running ongoing parent education programs. Agencies make use of the community space in a range of ways – holding meetings, having consultations with clients, and running training programs, either independently or in conjunction with us.

Our large-scale project has been our NAIDOC celebration on 31 July last year, which was launched by Kay Hulls, our Federal Member of Parliament, and attended by many community members and local organisations. It was a great way to celebrate an important occasion and network with community members and service providers.

We ran a parenting education series on "Keeping Our Children Safe" that is a really collaborative project involving many different agencies including a local women's refuge, the Community Health service and a family support agency. We even have a roster on which agency will provide the afternoon tea. This time we will provide childcare on site with the assistance of a local family support agency. We

have had a very good response with 12 parents and their 14 children already signed up many weeks before the program is due to begin.

How has the project changed your community? How do you know?

Because we (the centre and the project) are here, there is somewhere for community members to go with their issues. Those issues might be on a completely personal level – for example, somebody came to see us today after she had her purse stolen and didn't know what to do next. Or the issue might be community-wide – for example, a need for computer technology that can be used by community members for personal use, study or writing job application. A group of TAFE students who have been part of the centre almost since its inception were recently able to apply for and be provided with a computer. It will be housed in the centre and used by TAFE students and other community members, who can use it on a roster system. It is also likely to be used for the homework club.

We have a regular newsletter that is delivered to more than 200 individuals and organisations and we have network of community members who are regulars at the centre and who deliver those newsletter by hand to community members on the "mailing" list.

The centre is more and more used, and many people have become regulars.

Some of those individuals have found the centre helps provide a pathway

out of the crises that originally brought them here, and have moved from strength to strength and are now sources of support and encouragement to other community members.

How do you (the project) plan to maintain and build on the work you are doing into the future?

We as workers make sure that we keep in close contact with our community. We are always available and try to be aware of what is happening in the community. Our role is to help the community develop and maintain a vision for Ashmont and, through the operation of the centre and the community's involvement in the centre, to have more control and input into what happens in Ashmont. What happens here is community driven.

At another level, the way we (Sandra and Therese) work together is one model of how the community is working. That is in collaboration and a spirit of equality and reconciliation. We each have a different background, skills, networks and together we feel able to work with all members of our local community Indigenous and non-Indigenous. This model has recently been formally recognised by our auspice agency Anglicare as an appropriate, symbolic and strategic response to the local community.

We are working on further developing our Action Research and will continue to use that as a basis of planning and evaluation.



NAIDOC day. Back row from left to right: John, Jay, James, Sandra, Catherine, Piper, Therese, Greg, Sheree & baby. Front Row from left to right: Judy, Daryl Maguire (MP), Joyce, Melinda, Edna, Isabel.